

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 11, 2003
TO: Vincent Long, Assistant County Administrator
FROM: Benjamin H. Pingree, Special Projects Coordinator *BP*
SUBJECT: Appropriations Requests for the 2nd Session of the 108th Congress.

Background:

For several years, the Board has conducted a workshop to set their legislative priorities and to establish the County's legislative programs at the state and federal levels. The Board's practice has been to focus the County's federal legislative program on appropriations issues while coordinating any federal substantive or policy issues through our representation at the National Association of Counties (NACo).

In January of 2002, the Board retained a federal lobbying firm, Patton Boggs, to enhance the County's federal legislative program. The Board extended their contract with Patton Boggs through December 31, 2003. Staff continually works with Patton Boggs, throughout the year, to advocate for the County's targeted federal appropriation requests. Staff coordinates weekly with Patton Boggs by phone and e-mail to strategize on key federal budget issues and to identify new federal grant opportunities that could potentially fund County project requests.

In order to further improve communication between the Board and their federal lobbying firm, Patton Boggs has been submitting monthly memoranda to update the Board on their federal lobbying activities. Staff has also held meetings with Patton Boggs, and with members of the County's Congressional Delegation, to discuss and further prioritize the County's full funding request list. These efforts have been important in positioning the County's requests for available federal funding.

The 2003 federal budget included two significant appropriations for Leon County. As adopted in February of this year, the 2003 federal spending plan included a \$1 million appropriation for the widening of Capital Circle NW/SW from I-10 to the Airport and a \$375,000 appropriation for new equipment at the Ft. Braden Branch Library. Throughout the year, Patton Boggs has also worked with staff, and with the City of Tallahassee's contract federal lobbyist, to obtain \$71 million in funding for the widening of Capital Circle NW/SW through the re-enactment of the Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21 or "SAFE-TEA") and on other emerging County issues.

Update on ongoing activities of the first session of the 108th Congress:

Currently, neither house of Congress has adopted their version of the 2004 budget document. Similar to last year, it is likely that there may be one or a series of Continuing Resolutions (CR), potentially extending the time frame for adopting the 2004 spending plan into the new calendar year. The enactment of a CR would allow the federal government to continue operations over an interim period, while the final 2004 budget is being negotiated between the Congressional chambers.

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In addition, it also appears likely that Congress may extend the time period for final approval of the re-enactment of TEA 21 or SAFE-TEA beyond the end of the fiscal year (September 30th), perhaps into the beginning of 2004. The funding requests currently before Congress are projects identified at the September 17, 2002 Workshop on state and federal legislative priorities, less the project(s) for which funding has already been acquired. The following is a brief overview of each of the current federal appropriation request issues:

Capital Circle NW/SW from I-10 to the U.S. 90 - \$71,000,000 Requested

Staff from the County, the City, Blueprint 2000 and their respective federal lobbying teams have worked over the past two years to prepare and advocate for the County, City, Blueprint and MPO's #1 funding request for TEA 21 re-authorization funds. As Blueprint 2000 has already advanced over \$24 million in funding to finalize the purchase of all rights of way, any federal dollars received for this key project (including the \$1 million federal appropriation of 2003) will be directed towards the estimated total \$18 million to construct this roadway. In addition to TEA 21 or SAFE-TEA funding, the County is also seeking regular 2004 federal appropriations for this top ranked project.

Frenchtown Primary/Specialty/Mental Health Care Center - \$3,000,000 Requested

Leon County has worked collaboratively with the County Health Department and community health providers to increase access to healthcare for the low income and uninsured in our community. There are two key partners in the County's efforts. The first partner, Bond Community Health Center, recently opened a new facility in coordination with the County Health Department to expand their services. The County Health Department is also currently retrofitting a site near the Amtrack Station that will serve as a center for dental services. This request is to purchase and equip a new facility for the County's other primary partner for uninsured healthcare, Neighborhood Health Services (NHS). Limited by their existing, rented space at the Lincoln Center, a new NHS facility, in the Frenchtown area, would greatly improve comprehensive healthcare services for citizens.

Floodplain mapping - \$300,000 Requested

Tremendous advances in the mapping and stormwater modeling technology have occurred since the development of the 1991 Stormwater Master Plan. These advances will allow for updating and enhancing of the existing stormwater models and floodplain maps for Leon County. The FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) currently in use focus on the primary drainage system, which includes the large outfalls such as the West Drainage Ditch. The new topography obtained from updated GIS can be input to an enhanced stormwater model to determine flood impacts on the smaller streams as well. The model can also be used to evaluate land use changes, such as future build-out conditions or rezonings, to set buffer areas in the potentially affected areas downstream. In addition, water quality modeling can be linked to the stormwater model, allowing for prioritization of watersheds for stormwater treatment retrofit or special development zones as appropriate. Given that the St. Marks River Basin includes all of Leon County, and the St. Marks River is an "Outstanding Florida Water," stormwater management within the County has a state-wide benefit.

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Watershed Studies - \$500,000 Requested

Over the past four years, the County has aggressively sought funding for watershed and aquifer studies at both the state and federal levels. The County has been successful at the federal level, gaining funding for both the Lake Lafayette Watershed Study and for the Leon County Aquifer Protection Project. The next area targeted by staff for federal funding is the Eastern Sinks Watershed, but additional watersheds will be promoted based on funding availability in 2004.

Lake Munson In-Lake Restoration - \$6,000,000 Requested

Leon County has dedicated substantial resources to construct upstream stormwater treatment facilities so that a restored Lake Munson does not return to its current condition. The resource agencies which directed the upstream facility construction (such as FDEP and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) are being asked to assist in the restoration of the lake itself, including sediment removal, habitat restoration, and recreational enhancements. Specially designated funds to the in-lake restoration project, provided to these agencies or to Leon County, are desired to complete the project.

Lake Munson Southern Slough Improvements - \$7,500,000 Requested

The Southern Slough of Lake Munson was dredged as part of the WPA program in the 1950's. Since then the channel has been poorly maintained and is crossed by utilities and access roads, impeding the flow of stormwater from Lake Munson to the receiving waters at Ames Sink. The majority of the slough path is in the Apalachicola National Forest and an opportunity exists to work with the U.S. Forest Service to modify the Slough to increase floodplain storage and enhance the habitat in this area. These activities would include broadening the channel, improving connections to intermittent pools, removing invasive nonnative plant species, controlling access points to reduce unauthorized use of the Forest property and protect sensitive habitats and extending the St. Marks Greenway along the entire length of Lake Munson.

Proposed activities for the second session of the 108th Congress:

The second session of the 108th Congress will begin in January of 2004. Staff is recommending that the unfunded projects from the above list (first session of the 108th Congress) be updated and added to the project list for the second session of the 108th Congress, provided that such projects remain a County priority. In addition to these updated requests, staff recommends the addition of the following "new project" request:

(Equipment) Lake Jackson and Apalachee Parkway Branch Libraries - \$1,000,000 Requested

Building upon the success in gaining funding for equipment at the Ft. Braden Branch Library as part of the 2003 federal budget process, it is recommended that we seek similar levels of federal funding for both the new Lake Jackson Branch Library and Apalachee Parkway Branch Library (as planned). Each request will be for \$500,000 to assist in equipping each branch library.

Patton Boggs has also worked with the County, in an ongoing manner, to advocate for and assist in identifying of potential "Homeland Security" and other federal funding for the County's emergency medical services for the County and identifying potential funding sources for the County's Housing Program. Patton Boggs has also assisted in the advocacy for Army Corps of Engineering funding

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for the retrofitting of Okeeheepkee, Lexington and Rhoden Cove Ponds and in advocating for Neighborhood Health Center to gain Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) status and related funding for Neighborhood Health Center (*Please note:* Patton Boggs also assisted in continuation of FQHC funding for the Bond Community Health Center).

In short, all of these efforts have been beneficial to the County from a policy and funding perspective and would also be beneficial in the year ahead. In addition to approving the County's specific federal appropriation requests, I would also recommend approval of the continuation of these ongoing efforts of our federal lobbying firm.

Please note that the contract with the current County Federal Lobbyist, Patton Boggs, is scheduled to end on December 31, 2003. I will work to prepare an agenda item for the Board in December 2003, for their consideration on the continuation of our federal contract lobbying services.

Thank you.

BHP/bhp